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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3070
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5437
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2286
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0511
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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 1668
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5742
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7719
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0570
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0835
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002582

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post reported that PM Ehud Olmert will leave for Washington on Saturday for meetings with President Bush.

Leading media reported that the security forces are gearing up for trouble this weekend when 20,000 -25,000 Jews are expected to

descend upon Hebron for an annual pilgrimage. Officials fear the combination of the crowd and tensions over the planned evacuation of the so-called House of Contention could prove to be an explosive mix. The media reported that yesterday angry settlers attacked IDF soldiers, vandalized Palestinian property, and scrawled QMohammed is a pigQ on a local mosque.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Jordanian sources told the newspaper yesterday that PM Olmert assured JordanQs King Abdullah this week that Israel does not intend to launch a major offensive to bring down the Hamas regime in Gaza in the near future. The two Israeli leaders did not rule out a range of less dramatic military operations against Hamas and other operatives in Gaza. HaQaretz reported: QFor now, both Israel and Hamas seek to maintain quiet in the region.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Prime MinisterQs Office declared that Israel is willing to talk with Qall of its Arab neighborsQ on the basis of the 2002 Arab peace initiative, and that it welcomes PA President Mahmoud AbbasQs appeals to the Israeli public to support the plan by publishing a copy of the initiative in four Israeli dailies. However, the newspaper reported that FM Tzipi Livni slammed the Qall or nothingQ ultimatum of the initiativeQs proponents.

HaQaretz reported that 250 million shekels (around \$62,990,000) have been wasted on uncompleted West Bank roads.

Maariv reported that Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit plans to revoke the citizenship of self-exiled Arab politician Azmi Bishara.

Yediot reported that Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu has hired the services of two of President-elect Barack ObamaQs consultants Q Bill Knapp and Josh Icey (phon.).

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Ephraim Asculai, a former top official in the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission, told the newspaper that Iran will have enough highly enriched uranium by the end of 2009 to produce its first nuclear weapon. Asculai was refuting a New York Times article that claimed that Iran already had sufficient nuclear material to create a weapon.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday the human rights organization Gisha charged that the refusal of the army to allow fuel, cooking gas, and other commodities into Gaza constituted collective punishment of 1.5 million civilians. Yediot quoted intelligence sources as saying that Shin Bet torture procedures are still being applied, in contravention of a High Court ruling.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday the Jerusalem Municipality announced that it demolished a tent set up by an elderly Arab couple in East Jerusalem whose illegally built home had been razed earlier this month. The newspaper reported that a Bedouin army reservist is waiting for the state to raze a mosque he built in an unrecognized village.

HaQaretz reported that Tel Aviv Deputy Mayor Yael Dayan has proposed the establishment of a municipal human rights commission.

All media reported that yesterday the stock market tumbled as the economic growth outlook is worsening. The media reported on political pressure on the treasury to spread a safety net for pension funds and mutual funds.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Intel Israel and Numonyx dedicated an 80-million shekel (about \$20,156,000) membrane bio reactor (MBR) waste treatment facility, the largest and most advanced in Israel, which will serve their factories in Kiryat Gat. The Jerusalem Post quoted Strauss Group Ltd., IsraelQs biggest food company, as saying yesterday that its U.S. unit Sabra will send as much as \$68 million to open a factory in the state of Virginia scheduled to start production in 2010.

Mideast:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (11/20):
QThe Muslim and Arab world -- presumably excluding Iran, Hamas and Hizbullah -- have just made an unprecedented overture to the people of Israel.... We implore the Arab and Muslim world: Let us not make propaganda. Let us not wait another 60 years. Let us make peace.

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: Q[The government] must, once and for all, make it clear to the public in Israel -- not the settlements -- that there is one law for all, and no one is above it.

Political parties correspondent Yossi Verter wrote in Ha'aretz: QIn private conversations, Netanyahu expresses his concern about Labor and Barak's electoral fate in unambiguous terms.

Block Quotes:

I. "Yes to QSalamQ"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (11/20):
QThe Muslim and Arab world -- presumably excluding Iran, Hamas and Hizbullah -- have just made an unprecedented overture to the people of Israel. By coincidence, it comes just as al-Qaida reached out to the American people with their reaction to the election of Barack Obama.... In contrast, the Arab world's effort to appeal directly to the Israeli people is welcome and arguably constructive. The PA purchased space in this and other Israeli newspapers ... seeking support for the 2002 Saudi-inspired Arab League peace initiative. The ad also ran, in Arabic, in several Palestinian papers.... Neither the ad nor the Saudi plan itself acknowledge the inalienable right of the Jewish people to a national homeland within agreed borders. So Israelis -- across the political spectrum -- will find the Arab Peace Initiative deficient. Still, most of us, though disappointed that an offer which falls so short of Israel's minimal needs comes so late, will find themselves agreeing with President Shimon Peres: This is an overture worth exploring. After so much bloodshed and suffering on both sides, we implore the Arab and Muslim world: Let us not make propaganda. Let us not wait another 60 years. Let us make peace.

II. "No More Tolerance"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (11/20): QBoth the assaults by Hebron's Jewish thugs on Israel Defense Forces soldiers, which included throwing turpentine at a soldier's face, and the graffiti proclaiming QMohammed is a pigQ follow directly from rabbis' words. Rabbi Shalom Dov Wolpe, for instance, told a conference in Hebron this week that the QState of Israel in its current format is the enemy of the Jewish people.... We will defeat the domestic enemy, which at the moment is the State of Israel. All this was in response to a High Court of Justice ruling requiring the settlers to vacate the so-called House of Contention in Hebron until a district court decides who really owns it. This criminal aggression by settlers in Hebron and elsewhere has long been a tolerated routine. Ostensibly, Israel currently lacks a government capable of dealing with these lawbreakers.... This situation cannot be tolerated because a government that weakly allows the settlers to scoff at High Court decisions grants the rest of the country's citizens license to do the same. If you can spit in a soldier's face in Hebron, you can squat in houses in Jaffa [inside the Green Line]. The government must remove the settlers from the House of Contention immediately, indict everyone who attacked soldiers, and investigate everyone who threatened action against the state. It must, once and for all, make it clear to the public in Israel -- not the settlements -- that there is one law for all, and no one is above it.

III. "Vote for Barak, Because Israel Needs a Strong Likud"

Political parties correspondent Yossi Verter wrote in Ha'aretz (11/20): QNo less than Ehud Barak, maybe more than Amir Peretz, Benjamin Netanyahu wishes for the Labor Party to maintain its strength in the elections. Yes, yes, Netanyahu needs a Labor Party with 17-18 Knesset seats. If he could, he would have made an emotional appeal to the citizens: Vote Labor Party and Barak! Barak

and the Labor Party! Netanyahu wants Barak as defense minister in his government. He values him, counts on him, and he knows that he will need him and his chilly spirit during the harsh, tense days ahead.... In private conversations, Netanyahu expresses his concern about Labor and Barak's electoral fate in unambiguous terms. In his speech at the commencement of the Knesset's winter term, he declared that he would call on Tzipi Livni and Barak to serve in a broad unity government he would head. But Netanyahu's close entourage describes a different scenario according to which if the Likud-Right wing-ultra-Orthodox gains a majority, Netanyahu will prefer to form a coalition with Labor, the ultra-Orthodox, and Yisrael Beiteinu, and to leave Kadima in the opposition, assuming that around half of that faction -Q mostly Likud renegades -Q will hasten to splinter from it and join his coalition.

CUNNINGHAM